

DRAFT
Environmental Assessment

AXTELL BRIDGE
FISHING ACCESS SITE
IMPROVEMENTS



MONTANA FISH WILDLIFE & PARKS

MEPA/NEPA/23-1-110 MCA CHECKLIST

NOTE: Another five pages of checklist and letters developed for 23-1-110 MCA by the Parks Division are not attached to this document. The Parks Division and each Regional Parks Manager has the 23-1-110 MCA information.

The file is H:\user\fwps\share\forms\leacklist. It is a Word document. If you need it as a WordPerfect 6.1 document, it is available from the Administration & Finance Support Unit at phone (406) 444-4786.

Following is the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks checklist for Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Environmental Assessments (EA's). It can also be used for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion and Environmental Assessment documents for Federal Aid in Wildlife (P-R) and Sport Fish (W-B) Restoration projects.

MEPA/NEPA/23-1-110 MCA CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of Proposed State Action:** Enhance the Axtell Bridge FAS by increasing parking capacity and by adding an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible parking pad. An additional parking area will be built to accommodate five additional vehicles, while the current interior parking area will be reconfigured to also accommodate five vehicles (total of 10 spaces). A new entrance road will be built from the east creating flow through traffic rather than the current in and out the same way. A new ADA accessible pad will be added to the current parking area near the latrine along Axtell Road. Old barrier post will be removed and new barrier rocks will be added as necessary to keep vehicles confined. The regulation sign will be relocated and parking signs will be added.
2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:** The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, which directs Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to ensure that this function would be accomplished.
3. **Name of Project:** Axtell Bridge Fishing Access Site Improvements
4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency):** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is the project sponsor.
5. **If Applicable:**
 Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Spring 2005
 Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2005
 Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 100%
6. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township):** The Axtell Bridge FAS is located 10 miles south of Belgrade on U.S. 191, milepost 77, then 1 mile west on Axtell Road. The site is located in section 35 of Township 2 South, Range 4 East, NW ¼, Gallatin County, Montana. The site is 4.25 acres.
7. **Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>1</u>
residential.....	<u>0</u>		
industrial.....	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
		irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	<u>1</u>	dry cropland	<u>0</u>
		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

8. **Map/site plan:** attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.

Please see Appendix 2 for site location and Appendix 3 for site plan.

9. **Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

(a) Permits:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
Army Corps of Engineers	404	
Fish Wildlife and Parks, Stream Bank Protection	124	
DEQ, Short Term Water Quality Exemption	318	
DNRC, Navigable Rivers Land Use license/easement		
Gallatin County Flood Plain Permit		
DEQ, Storm Water runoff plan		
Gallatin County, Weed Plan		

(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$23,375.00

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
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10. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

Enhance the Axtell Bridge FAS by increasing parking capacity and by adding an ADA accessible parking pad. An additional parking area will be built to accommodate five additional vehicles, while the current interior parking area will be reconfigured to also accommodate five vehicles (total of 10 spaces). A new entrance road will be built from the east creating flow through traffic rather than the current in and out the same way. A new ADA accessible pad will be added to the current parking area near the latrine along Axtell Road. Old barrier post will be removed and new barrier rocks will be added as necessary to keep vehicles confined. The regulation sign will be relocated and parking signs will be added.

The Axtell Bridge FAS is located 10 miles south of Belgrade and 12 miles west of Bozeman. This location makes it a popular area for local anglers and outdoor enthusiasts. Currently there is parking available for 8-10 vehicles in the 2 parking lots (6-8 on east side and 1-2 on west side). Frequently, parking spills-over onto the county road, causing traffic hazards. The Gallatin County sheriff and surrounding neighbors have complained about this problem.

The addition of a parking area and an ADA accessible parking spot at this site will decrease traffic concerns on the county road, improve visitor's access to the site, and be compliant with Fish, Wildlife & Parks mandate to serve the public through providing fishing access sites. In addition, improving the current parking areas and access roads will add to the ease of visitor use. Finally, additional FAS signs, regulation signs, and barriers will provide information and promote public safety while minimizing resource degradation.

11. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA

- Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks
 - Parks Division
 - Wildlife Division
 - Fisheries Division
 - Design and Construction Bureau
- Montana Department of Commerce—Tourism
- Montana Natural Heritage Program—Natural Resources Information System
- Gallatin County Floodplain Administrator
- US Fish and Wildlife Service



Current boat launch. Proposed parking area would be located east of boat launch in cottonwood trees (behind the truck in picture). Photo taken from west bank looking east.



Current parking area. Proposed ADA accessible parking pad would be located under blue Suburban in foreground. Proposed action would be to reclaim this parking lot. Photo taken from bridge looking east.



Close-up of cottonwood forest; where proposed parking area would be located. Photo taken from boat launch looking east.



Barriers at boat launch that would be removed in proposed action. Photo taken from boat launch access road looking north.



Approximate location of proposed access road to new parking area. Photo taken from Axtell Road looking west.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			X		Yes	1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X			1b.
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a. The proposed project will not alter geological substructure and will minimally impact soil stability. The parking area will be located in the 100-year floodplain area. Erosion is expected to be minor, with potential flooding in the spring. Surface runoff should be minimal due to the low slope and the gravel sandy loam.

1b. The access road and parking area will be partially constructed in the location of a mature cottonwood forest, and thus will result in over-covering of the soil. To minimize impact of vehicular traffic, vehicles will be confined to designated areas through the use of rock barriers.

1c. The proposed plan will not destroy, cover or modify any unique geologic or physical feature.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))			X		Yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?			X		Yes	2c.
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		x				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		X				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a. Minor amounts of dust will be temporarily created during construction and improvements of roads and parking areas.

2c. Removal of mature cottonwood trees will alter the local moisture and temperature patterns. The number of trees removed will be minimal to mitigate this type of alteration.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Yes	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		X				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		X				
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3b. To help minimize changes in drainage pattern caused by construction, the parking area will be located on an area of low slope. In addition the work will be done to Best Management Practices (BMP) standards, which will divert all runoff from parking areas and roads away from the river.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X			See 4a.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e.
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. Approximately 0.5 acres of mature cottonwood forest will be removed to build the parking area. The number of trees removed will be minimized.

4c. The Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resources Information System) found no species of concern in their databases for this area (April 20, 2004). In addition, the US Fish and Wildlife Service found no records of species of concern in the area.

4e. Currently there are minimal weed infestations at the site. Development of an area often leads to the establishment and spread of noxious weed. To decrease the establishment and spread of weeds the site will be monitored and weed control provided as necessary.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		Yes	5g
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		X				See 5f
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				See 5f
j. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

5f. The Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resources Information System) found no species of concern in their databases for this area (April 20, 2004). In addition, the US Fish and Wildlife Service found no records of species of concern in the area.

5g. Increased site visitation may increase conditions that cause stress to wildlife populations; but limiting site usage through the number of parking spaces, limiting site access through barriers, and posting site regulations will help to minimize increased stress to wildlife populations.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		Yes	6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. An increase in existing noise levels would occur with increased traffic and number of people visiting the site. However, additional parking is being added to accommodate the usage that is already occurring; therefore, increased usage will likely be minimal.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?			X			7c.
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7c. Visitors to the site sometimes trespass onto the private land on the SE corner of the Axtell Bridge. In addition, unrestrained dogs have been a problem on this private land. A more developed sight may prevent this type of trespassing, as the location of the sight will be more identifiable. Currently the private land is fenced and posted with no trespassing signs.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		Yes	9e.
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9e. There will be a decrease in traffic hazards at the site. Currently due to high usage, numerous vehicles are parking on the county road. With the addition of a second parking area and expansion of the existing parking area it is anticipated that sufficient off-road parking will be available.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:			X		Yes	10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources						10e.
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 10a.** Proposed action will decrease parking violations, thus will result in less enforcement.
- 10e.** The proposed project will be funded through Fishing License Revenue.
- 10f.** Maintenance costs will be funded from the Region 3 Fishing Access Site Maintenance Account. The development at the site will only result in a minor increase in maintenance costs. Estimated maintenance cost: \$1000-1200 per year.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u>	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)			X		Yes	11c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

11c. The project will improve the public services and facilities at the FAS. It will improve that quality and quantity of tourism opportunities and settings. Please see Appendix 4 Tourism report.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?	X					12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?	X					See 12a.
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?	X					See 12a.
d. **** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)	X					See 12a.
e. Other:	X					

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. FWP is having a cultural survey conducted at this site, and they will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) when the survey is complete.

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if, they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		X				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- *** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- **** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW, CONTINUED

- 2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:**

Alternative A: No Action

Axtell Bridge FAS is a popular site for anglers and outdoor enthusiasts. Its close proximity to Bozeman contributes to the high usage of the site. Currently, there is parking available for 8-10 vehicles. Frequently the parking areas cannot accommodate the number of people visiting the site. Thus, parking often occurs on the county road near a narrow bridge. The surrounding landowners have complained about this traffic hazard. The county sheriff may ticket vehicles to prevent this hazard. In addition, the site is not disabled accessible. By not improving the site, visitor numbers will be kept in check due to limited parking and accessibility, and traffic hazards will continue to occur.

Alternative B: Proposed Development and Preferred Alternative

The proposed development improves the existing parking, adds additional parking capability and improves disabled access. Posting regulation signs and utilizing parking barriers to limit vehicle access to designated roads and parking areas will mitigate resource damage to the site. The additional parking capacity, disabled parking site, and improved parking areas will allow more visitors to access the site. In addition the proposed changes will decrease traffic hazards on Axtell Road and decrease conflicts with local landowners.

Alternative C: High Level of Development

A high level of development at the site would consist of paving the access roads and current parking lot, adding an additional paved parking lot, and adding another latrine to the site. This type of change would increase visitor usage of the site and access to the site. However, Axtell Bridge FAS is only 4.25 acres and this type of development may increase visitation beyond acceptable limits.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Erosion of the soil and riverbank will be minimal. The parking area will be located on an area with low slope to minimize erosion. In addition, Best Management Practices (BMP) design standards will be utilized to minimize or eliminate erosion. In addition, rock barriers will prevent vehicle disruption and erosion of soils at the site.

Air quality will be minimally and temporarily affected by improving the site. Dust created during construction of access road and parking area will be minor and temporary. In addition, removal of the cottonwood forest will alter moisture and temperature patterns. The number of trees removed will be minimized to mitigate this type of alteration.

Changes in the drainage pattern due to construction of the new access road, new parking area and reclamation of current parking area will be minimal. All alterations will occur on an area of low slope to minimize drainage alteration. In addition, BMP design standards will be utilized to minimize or eliminate drainage from road and parking areas into the river.

Vegetation at the site will be minimally impacted. Approximately 0.5 acres of mature cottonwood forest will be removed for the new parking area and access road. A minimal numbers of trees will be removed. Confining vehicular activity to access roads and parking areas, through use of barriers, will prevent deterioration of vegetation.

To decrease the establishment and spread of noxious weeds, maintenance crews will follow weed prevention protocols.

Increased site visitation may increase conditions that cause stress to wildlife populations; but limiting site usage through the number of parking spaces, limiting site access through barriers, and posting site regulations will help to minimize increased stress to wildlife populations.

The proposed development may increase visitation to the site. However, the improvements are designed to accommodate the usage that is already occurring.

The proposed development will not alter any land use or create any health hazards.

The proposed development will decrease traffic hazards (caused by vehicles parking on the county road) at the site. With the addition of a parking area and improvement of existing parking areas fewer vehicles will park on the road.

The proposed development will improve public services and facilities at the FAS. It will improve the quality and quantity of tourism opportunities and settings.

The proposed development will not alter any cultural or historical resources.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

Axtell Bridge FAS provides a convenient opportunity for recreationists due to its close proximity to Bozeman. Utilization of the site may increase with improvements; however the proposed improvements are designed to accommodate usage that is already occurring and prevent degradation of the site. The proposed level of development is appropriate as it will accommodate current visitors, improve access to the site, and decrease parking hazards along the county road.

This Environmental Assessment did not reveal any significant negative impacts on the physical and human environment. Most minor impacts will be mitigated. No threatened and endangered species have been located in the area. No unique geological or physical features will be affected. The proposed development will increase visitor enjoyment at the site.

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

1. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO. If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review found no significant negative impacts from the proposed action at the Axtell Bridge FAS. Thus, an EIS is not necessary and an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

2. **Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**

The public will be notified in the following ways to comment on the EA of the Axtell Bridge FAS improvements:

1. Legal notices will be published in the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* and the *Helena Independent Record*.
2. Legal notice and the Draft EA will be posted on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks webpage: <http://www.fwp.state.mt.us/publicnotices>

The neighboring landowners will receive copies of the EA or notice that the EA is available upon request.

This level of public involvement is appropriate since all negative impacts are minor and most can be mitigated.

3. Duration of comment period, if any.

The public comment period will last 30 days and comments must be received by 5:00 pm on December 22, 2004. Comments may be e-mailed to tgreason@montana.edu or written comments may be sent to the following address:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Attn: Axtell Bridge FAS EA
1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

4. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Sally Schrank
Independent contractor
112 Riverview C
Great Falls, MT 59404
406-268-0527

Tom Greason
Park Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718
406-994-6987

APPENDICES

1. 23-1-110 MCA Project Qualification Checklist
2. Site Location Map
3. Site Plan
4. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
5. Clearance Letter from State Historic Preservation Office -- PENDING

APPENDIX 1
23-1-110 MCA
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: June 14, 2004

Person Reviewing: Sally Schrank

Project Location: The Axtell Fishing Access site is located 10 miles south of Belgrade on U.S. 191, milepost 77, then 1 mile west on Axtell Road. The site is located in section 35 of Township 2 South, Range 4 East, NW ¼, Gallatin County, Montana.

Description of Proposed Work: Enhance the Axtell Bridge FAS by increasing parking capacity, and by adding an ADA accessible parking pad. An additional parking area will be built to accommodate five additional vehicles, while the current interior parking area will be reconfigured to also accommodate five vehicles (total of 10 spaces). A new entrance road will be built from the east creating flow through traffic rather than the current in and out the same way. A new ADA accessible pad will be added to the current parking area near the latrine along Axtell Road. Old barrier post will be removed and new barrier rocks will be added as necessary to keep vehicles confined. The regulation sign will be relocated, and parking signs will be added.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 MCA rules. (Please check U all that apply and comment as necessary.) Capital Construction projects - prepared by D & C; Force Account projects - prepared by Region.

☒ A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?

Comments: A new access road and parking area will be built over undisturbed land.

☐ B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?

Comments:

☐ C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?

Comments:

☒ D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?

Comments: Currently, there is parking for 8-10 vehicles at the site. The proposed improvements will create 3-4 additional parking spaces.

☐ E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?

Comments:

☐ F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?

Comments:

[] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?

Comments:

[] H. Any new above ground utility lines?

Comments:

[] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?

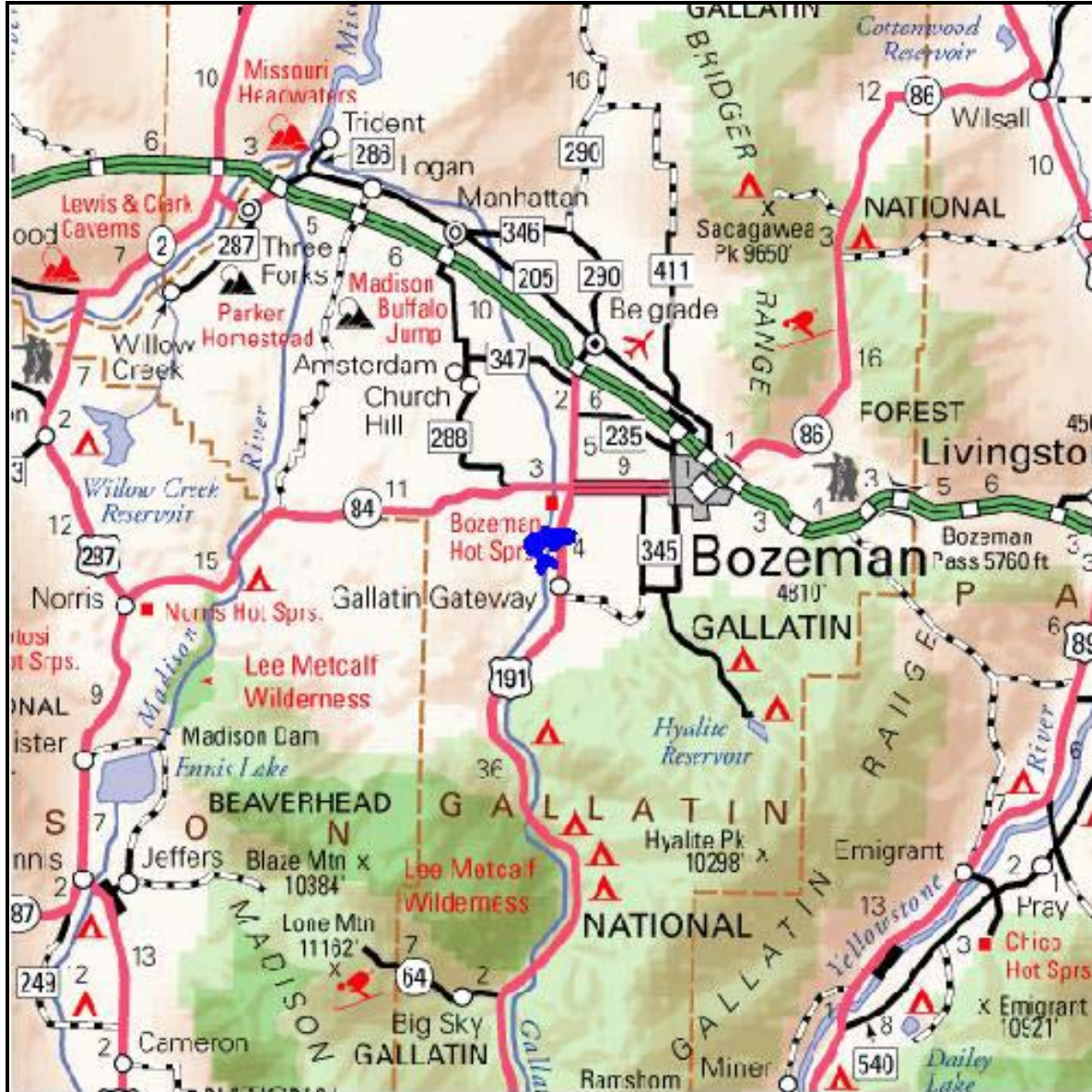
Comments:

[] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?

Comments:

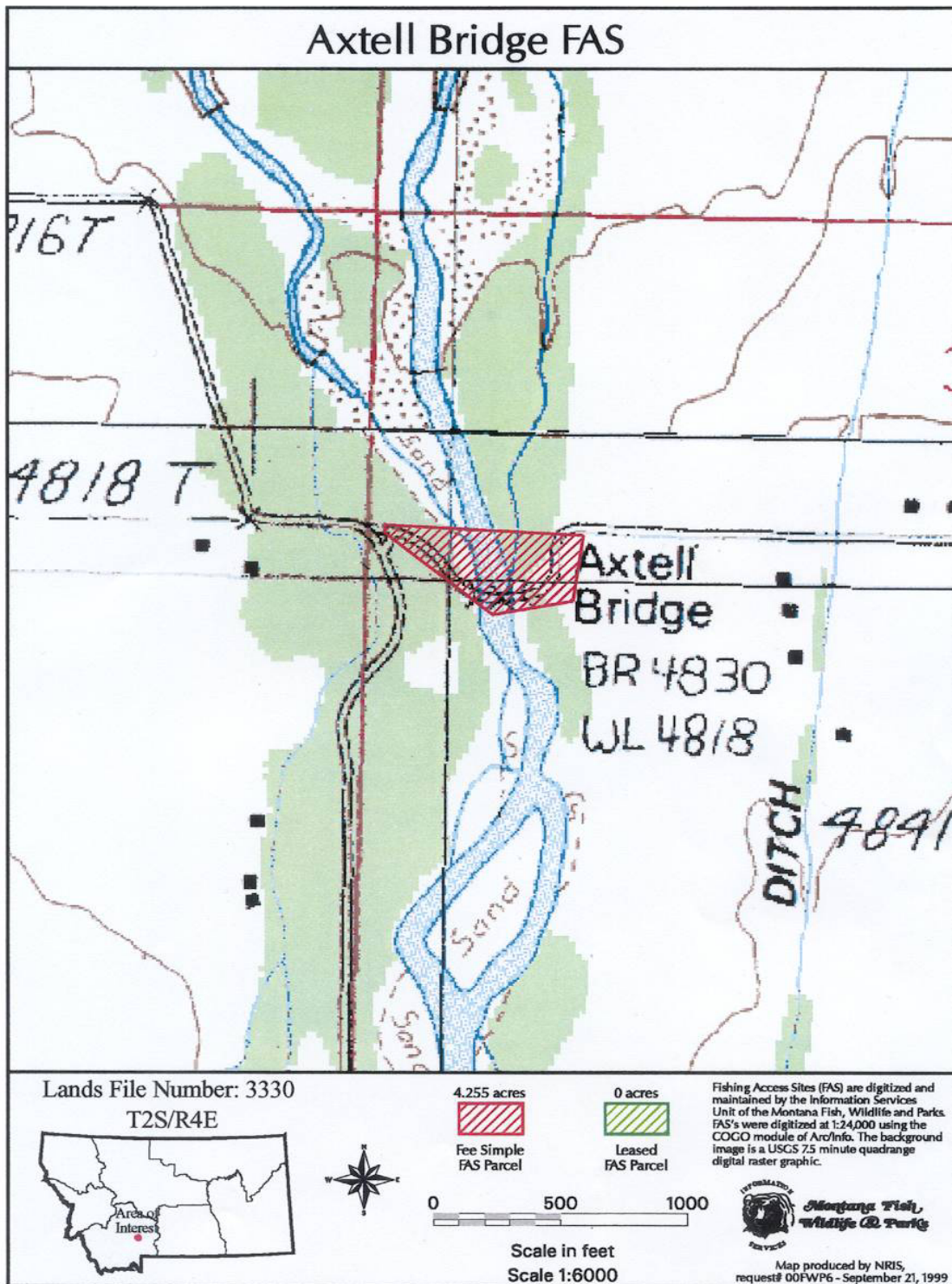
If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/23-1-110 MCA CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/23-1-110 MCA Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX 2
SITE LOCATION MAP
Axtell Bridge Fishing Access site
Township 2 South, Range 4 East, Section 35 NW ¼; 4.25 acres total

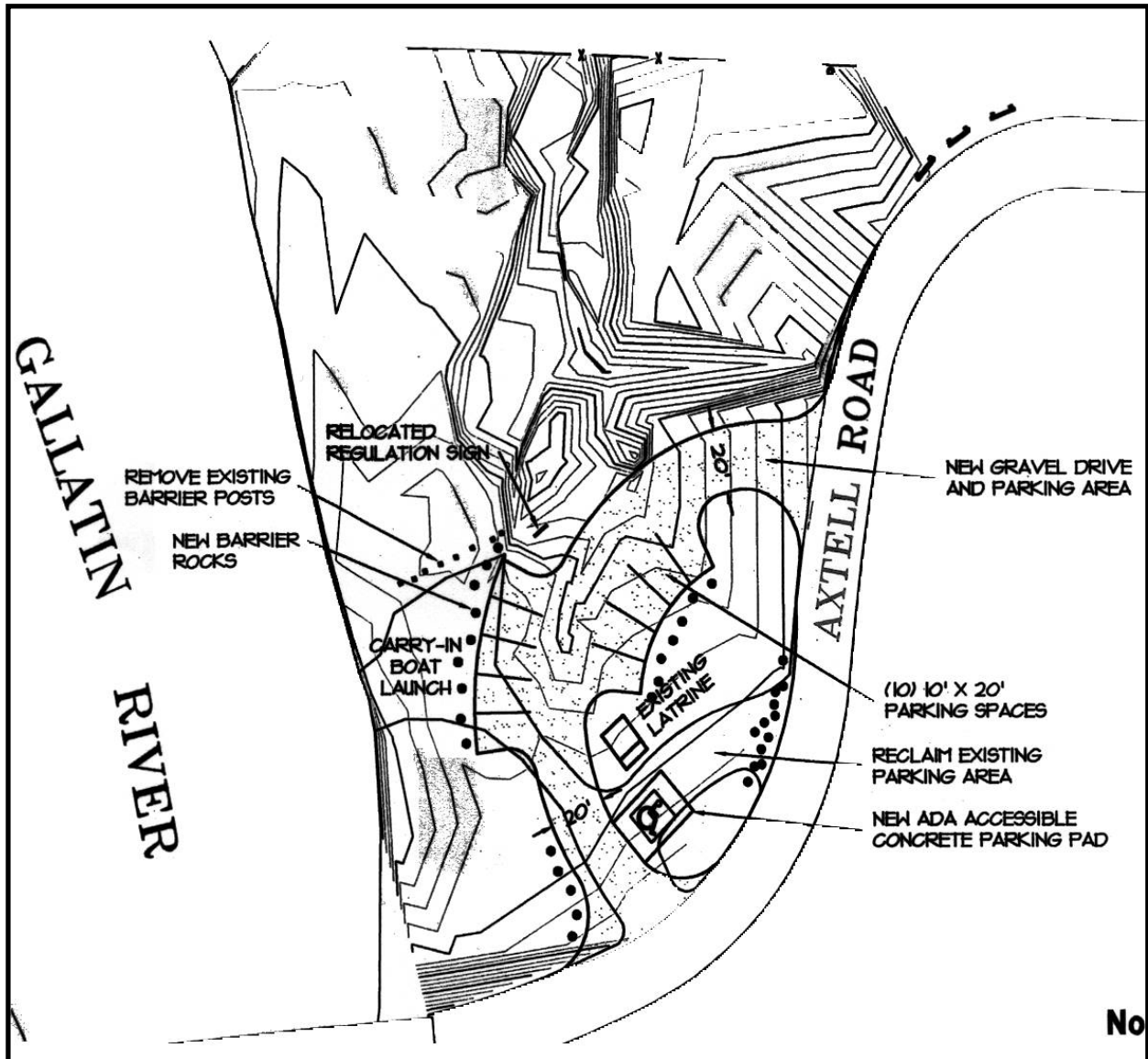


Fish symbol identifies the location of Axtell Bridge Fishing Access Site.

APPENDIX 2 continued



APPENDIX 3 SITE PLAN



APPENDIX 4
TOURISM REPORT
MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by HB495 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
1424 9th Ave.
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Axtell Bridge Fishing Access Site Maintenance and Improvements

Project Description: Enhance the Axtell Bridge Fishing Access Site by increasing parking areas and performing maintenance on current parking areas and access roads. An additional parking area will be added to accommodate 6-8 vehicles. Current roads and parking areas will be leveled. Barriers and signs will be added as necessary.

1 Would this site development/project have an impact on the tourism economy?

NO ☒ YES

If YES, briefly describe:

As described, project would improve public services and facilities at this FAS. The ~~benefits~~ ^{impacts} on the tourism economy would be positive.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?

NO ☒ YES

If YES, briefly describe:

As described, it appears to improve the setting and opportunities.

Signature

Victor A. Bjornberg

Date 6-24-09